

The Trauma Theme of "You Fly to Your Mountain Like a Bird" from the Perspective of Trauma Theory

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Abstract: *"You Fly Like a Bird to Your Foot" records the thoughtless yet inspiring life experiences of American white woman Tara Westford through a personal biography. From the perspective of trauma theory, this article explores the trauma theme of the book: interpreting the sources of Tara's individual trauma, namely the psychological trauma brought to Tara by her native family; Analyze Tara's journey of self discovery, that is, the path through which Tara repairs wounds and seeks her true self; And explore narrative strategies for reproducing traumatic memories, such as autobiographical novel forms and location depictions. Education bridged the psychological trauma brought to Tara by her native family and gave her the courage and strength to fly to her own forest.*

Keywords: Trauma theory; Original family; Self seeking; education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tara Westover (1986-) is an American biographer and historian. Her debut novel "Educated: A Memoir" uses a personal biographical narrative to record the incredible growth experience of a white American girl. In 2018, the book received considerable acclaim upon its publication, becoming the number one best-selling book in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and other publications. The Chinese translation of the book was released in China in November 2019 and is highly loved by Chinese readers. At present, there is relatively little research on the book "You Fly Like a Bird to Your Foot" in China. The author intends to explore the individual trauma of Tara, the protagonist of this book, from the perspective of trauma theory from the perspective of trauma. Narrative strategies for the repair and healing of sources, trauma, and the reproduction of traumatic memories.

2. SOURCES OF TRAUMA IN TARA INDIVIDUALS

The trauma that native families may cause to individuals cannot be underestimated. Unlike the newborn family formed by an individual as an adult, the original family refers to the family in which an individual is raised after birth and is the initial place for learning emotional experiences. Tara's native family has a large population base, with a family of nine living on Buck Peak. Father Gene suffers from bipolar disorder without realizing it, blindly instilling extreme thoughts into his children. The main symptoms of this condition, such as paranoia, mania, feeling good about oneself, and delusions of persecution, are fully demonstrated in Gene. Mother Faye plays the role of a flatterer, unable to prevent herself from guessing what others want her to be, nor from forcing herself to make changes. Therefore, he and Gene live silently on the internet. The term 'trauma' originated from the ancient Greek word 'traumatikos', which originally meant pain. Trauma generally refers to physical or psychological damage caused by external factors, which can refer to damage caused by certain external forces or psychological damage caused by strong emotional injuries. The American Psychological Association defines psychological trauma as post-traumatic stress disorder, which is a type of stress disorder characterized by delayed psychopathological reactions that occur after experiencing intense psychological trauma or major life events. American scholar Cathy Caruth believes that "trauma describes the overwhelming experience of a sudden or catastrophic event, in which the response to the event often occurs in a delayed, uncontrollable repetition of various illusions and other disruptive phenomena[3].

In 'You Fly Like a Bird to Your Foot', Tara portrays the psychological trauma brought to her by her native family. The sharp change in attitude towards her brother Shawn, who was originally very close to her, was the trigger for Tara's personal trauma. Sean's actions made Tara morbidly believe that she was indestructible, but the fact was that Tara suffered a psychological trauma.

For ten years, it has been haunting her like a nightmare day by day. The lack of recognition and inaction by family

members are the direct sources of Tara's psychological trauma. Mother Faye witnessed the entire process, but Faye initially chose to remain silent and ignore it. It wasn't until another daughter also stood up to support Tara that Faye admitted this fact, "realizing that there was something ugly, and I turned a blind eye to it. The mother promised her daughters that she would confess to their father Gene, but the silent mother continued to remain silent and did not mention a word to Gene. When Tara spoke openly with her father, Gene expressed that he did not believe her. He believed Tara's hysterical memories were untrustworthy and scolded Tara for "recklessly accusing others". My father chose to believe in Sean, and my mother is still defending him, calling everything that happened a play between children. Gene rebuked Tara for distorting reality and believed that Tara's anger was the real threat to the entire family. In the end, Tara severed her relationship with her parents and fled her original family. However, the parents' defense of Sean and their denial of their own victimization shattered Tara's world. Tara refused to accept her father's blessings to eliminate the devil's control over her, and the division with her family and confusion about her self-awareness caused Tara's mental breakdown and daily nightmares.

3. TARA'S JOURNEY OF SELF DISCOVERY

The essential prerequisite for the victim to embark on a journey of self discovery is to repair the wound. Hermann Judith Herman pointed out the general process of trauma repair in his book 'Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence, from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror'. He believed that 'the process of recovery can be divided into three stages: the first stage is the establishment of safety; the second stage is retrospective and mourning; and the third stage is the reconstruction of connections with normal life' [5]. The book 'You Fly to Your Foot Like a Bird' reproduces the entire process of Tara's wound healing.

In the first stage of trauma repair, Tara, who was plagued by post-traumatic stress disorder and unable to distinguish between imagination and reality, escaped Buck Peak. At this stage, the traumatized Tara began to instill in herself the concept of being indestructible and unaffected by anything. At the same time, she began to write a diary, trying to control her memory by reconstructing reality in the diary. In the second stage, Tara, who was on the edge of society after stepping out of her stride, began to try to communicate with people her father referred to as "pagans". Bishop Kerry, Professor Steinberg, who were curious about Tara, helped Tara slowly open up her heart. At this stage, Tara still tried to bury unbearable memories, either avoiding or evading her past. In the third stage, Tara regained her confidence and began discussing her childhood anecdotes with her friends, describing her hometown of Buck Peak, numerous waste factories, barns, and livestock pens to her classmates. At this moment, Tara found her sense of belonging in Cambridge. It wasn't until she met Drew that Tara made her debut.

Without reservation, he told the outside world about his family and family, and no longer deliberately concealed his past. However, facing the surrender and defection of her sister Audrey and the demonization of herself by her parents, Tara's wound healing returned to the first stage. Tara completely collapsed, with panic attacks and nighttime sleepwalking once again distancing her from her friends. Unable to think, she watches TV dramas day and night seeking psychological comfort. Tara's performance in the second and third stages is exactly the psychological symptoms exhibited by the victim: "They both want to draw attention to the indescribable secret of the trauma and try to hide its existence. The victim will alternately experience two different symptoms: numbness and the recurrence of the trauma event" [5]. Later, Tara chose psychological counseling and treatment. After a continuous year of treatment, she gradually regained her composure and began learning again. Tara's research has restored her confidence in facing life and helped her understand that history is written by herself. Education gave Tara the strength and courage to once again face past fears and make a choice: to fly to her own forest.

Education has healed the psychological trauma brought to Tara by her native family, helping her reshape her understanding of the world and herself. When Sean faced Tara with violence for the second time, Tara decided to leave Buck Peak and study at Brigham Young University. From self-taught and admitted to Brigham Young University, to receiving the Gates Cambridge Scholarship to study in Cambridge, from master's to doctoral, Tara's new knowledge has repeatedly refreshed her understanding of the world, and has also given her some basic understanding of her brother, father, and self. Returning to her hometown several times during the holidays made her ponder over her violent experiences. She also wavered between her family and herself, believing that she was an unqualified daughter and a traitor to the family. Tara once wanted to reconcile with her father and family. Tara has also questioned her own memories, blindly following the judgments of others, and even for a moment, Tara was willing to give up her views on right and wrong, reality, and reason, just to win the love of her parents. However, Tara's education told her that "the most powerful factor in determining who you are comes from within" [4], and thus Tara embarked on a journey of self discovery. Education has brought Tara into the new world and

opened the door for Tara to find herself. In Tara's own opinion, it is education that helps her find herself. You can refer to this new self in many ways: transformation, transformation, hypocrisy, betrayal. And I call it education. As for Tara's understanding of education, she said in an interview with Forbes that "education means obtaining different perspectives and understanding different people, experiences and history. To receive education, don't let your education ossify into arrogance. Education should be the expansion of thought, the deepening of empathy, and the broadening of vision. It should not make your prejudice become more stubborn" [6]. After finding her true self, Tara resolutely left Buck Peak and flew to her own forest.

4. REPRODUCTION OF TRAUMATIC MEMORY

Location, as an important contextual factor, is an important narrative strategy for reproducing traumatic memories. In the book *The Essence of American Trauma Fiction*, Michelle Balaev put forward the personality characteristics, family history, cultural background, geographical location, and the influence of the age of the individual of the hero, and determined the memory of the hero in his own consciousness when facing the injury event, which is the essence of trauma. In addition, Michelle believes that these factors. Not only does it affect and determine the extent to which the protagonist is harmed, but it also affects and determines how the protagonist steps out of the shadow caused by the harm and reshapes himself. Among many factors, Michelle believes that contextual factors, namely location, are particularly important because location can showcase the value of trauma from multiple perspectives. The location of traumatic experiences and memories is a very important indicator in the trauma description of novels, because "location is a silent character, which, together with cultural background and historical era, determines the value of the harm suffered by individuals and groups. It influences the emotions of the characters and determines the author's narrative style, rather than just being hidden behind the plot as a background [7].

In the book *You Fly to Your Foot Like a Bird*, the author's depiction of location plays a crucial role in reproducing traumatic memories. The most important location of this novel is Buck Peak, which is an important basis for Tara to define her personal identity. For author Tara, Buck Peak is synonymous with home and the source of her painful memories, so Tara has a complex emotional understanding of Buck Peak. The traumatic memories of Buck Peak and Tara are interdependent, and during different periods of Tara's traumatic events, Buck Peak plays a polarized role in Tara's personal identity definition. Before Tara went through the traumatic events, Buck Peak, as the "Indian princess" in Tara's father's story and Tara's childhood playground, undoubtedly brought infinite joy to Tara as a child. At this point, Tara's relationship with her parents did not split. In her eyes, Buck Peak was a warm harbor, and as a member of her family, she found a sense of belonging and collectivity in Buck Peak. However, after Tara experienced the traumatic event, Buck Peak was a difficult forbidden area for her to cross, unable to reach the warmth of her family. Once she stepped in, the heart wrenching pain would repeat itself.

Before Tara emerged from this traumatic memory, she believed that 'no matter how much change I seem to have undergone - how brilliant my education is, how my appearance has changed - I am still her. At best, I am just two people divided within. She is inside, and every time I cross the threshold of my father's house, she appears' [4]. At this moment, Tara, located on Buck Peak, was unable to recognize herself and fell into a world of trauma and self reconstruction.

5. ARA FLEES THE GREAT WALL

The role played by Buck Peak is constantly changing, summoning Tara like a mother and becoming furious like a paranoid father. Buck Peak has been influencing Tara's thoughts, Traumatic memories that touch Tara: I have always been longing for the princess. On the other side of the ocean, I heard her call, as if I were an annoying calf in her herd. At first, she comforted me with a gentle voice, but when I didn't agree and turned away, her voice became angry. I betrayed her. I imagined her face twisted with anger, her posture heavy and threatening. For many years, she had lived in my mind as a disdainful goddess [4]. Until Tara reconciled with herself, the final image of Buck Peak is clearly presented in her own world: "But now seeing her, standing in her fields and pastures, I realize I misunderstood her. She was not angry about my departure, because it was also a part of her life cycle. Her role is not to herd bison, not to use force to gather them and restrict them, but to celebrate their return.

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